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SUBJECT: UNSC UNANIMOUSLY EXTENDS UNIFIL'S MANDATE

REF: STATE 91898

11. (SBU) The UN Security Council unanimously approved resolution 1832 on August 27 to extend the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) until August 31, 2009. (Note: The full text of the resolution is contained in reftel and can be found on the UN website. End note.) France, Belgium, Croatia, Italy, the UK, and the U.S. co-sponsored the resolution. South Africa objected to its designation as a Presidential text (essentially co-sponsored by all 15 members). No council members provided explanations of vote (EOVs). Both Israel and Lebanon spoke after the vote.

12. (SBU) Israeli Acting Perm Rep Ambassador Danny Carmon expressed Israel's appreciation to the troop contributing countries and to UNIFIL and all of its components. He said that Israel welcomes the extension of UNIFIL's mandate and recognizes the important role it plays maintaining an area free of armed assets, aside from those belonging to UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces. He referenced the Secretary General's last 1701 report, which highlighted the challenges facing UNIFIL. He said that transfers of weapons from Iran and Syria to areas both north and south of the Litani River challenge UNIFIL's operations. He noted that last year's report of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team (LIBAT) spoke for itself and expressed certainty that this year's report would do the same. He emphasized the danger that hostile groups who observe and monitor UNIFIL's activities pose to the region's peace and stability and to the safety of UNIFIL's personnel. Though he did not explicitly reference the 12th preambular paragraph of last year's renewal resolution (UNSCR 1773), he essentially restated that language by urging UNIFIL to take all necessary action to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities and to resist attempts to prevent it from discharging its mandate. He specifically declared that the Lebanese government's new policy guidelines complicate UNIFIL's ability to execute its mandate since, instead of calling for the disarmament of armed groups, the new guidelines implicitly back one of those groups -- Hizballah. In closing, he stressed that the Israeli government remains committed to the fulfillment of UNSCR 1701, particularly through the tripartite mechanism.

13. (SBU) Lebanese Perm Rep Ambassador Nawaf Salam lauded the Council for renewing UNIFIL's mandate and commended UNIFIL and its commander for their work. He noted the approaching second anniversary of UNSCR 1701 and emphasized the Lebanese government's continued commitment to the full implementation of UNSCR 1701, as evidenced by the continued deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the area of operations. He then went on to list how 1701 remains unimplemented as a result of Israeli action or inaction: through Israel's daily violations of Lebanese airspace, through its non-hand-over of maps of cluster bomb munitions, through its non-withdrawal from northern Ghajar, and through the lack of a solution to the Sheba'a Farms question. He said that there was no question which party was obstructing the full implementation of 1701.

He asked why Israeli Defense Minister Barak had not met with the UNIFIL Force Commander. He said that the Lebanese government viewed with alarm the recent verbal threats by Israeli leaders towards Lebanon which had prompted Lebanese Prime Minister Siniora to write to the Secretary General on August 22, 2008. (Note: USUN e-mailed a copy of Prime Minister Siniora's letter to IO/UNP on August 26. End note.) For all these reasons, Salam said the Lebanese government was thankful for the renewal of UNIFIL's mandate.

Wolff